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Appendix A - Background Information on Transit-Oriented Development Potential

Connecticut Conservation and Development Plan Policies

The Office of Policy and Management (OPM) maintains The Connecticut Conservation and Development Plan Policies for Connecticut, 2005-2010 (C&D Plan). The C&D Plan includes policies that guide the planning and decision-making processes of state government relative to balancing economic growth with resource conservation concerns, and coordinating state planning activities with long-term effectiveness in the expenditure of public funds. Growth Management Principle #3 of the C&D Plan is “Concentrate Development around Transportation Nodes along Major Transportation Corridors to the Viability of Transportation Options.”

According to this principle, transportation planning must integrate ideas and processes from the local, state, and regional level. The principle goes on to encourage transit supportive land uses through a “process whereby communities plan and zone for intensive, mixed use development in close proximity to transit stations or along transit corridors where physical infrastructure is typically already in place.” Such land uses are seen as an opportunity for infill development around stations, and such development could result in making municipalities more attractive to visitors.

Office of Policy and Management Office of Responsible Growth

The Office of Responsible Growth was established by Executive Order 15 to coordinate state efforts to revitalize cities, preserve the unique charm of the state, and build livable, economically strong communities while protecting natural resources.

Department of Economic and Community Development Responsible Growth Guidelines

Connecticut’s Responsible Growth Task Force, which works closely with the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD), defines responsible growth as “economic, social, and environmental development that incorporates land use and resources in ways that enhance the long-term quality of life for current and future generations of Connecticut residents.”

DECD Responsible Growth criteria include:

1. Project activities should be in conformance with the Conservation and Development Policies Plan for Connecticut.
2. Locate Projects within existing developed areas and promote infill development.
3. Locate projects within existing public utilities service areas (water, sewer, etc.).
4. Projects outside of public utility services areas should be scaled to use on-site systems, where practicable, to manage unplanned development of adjacent land.
5. Promote transit-oriented development.
6. Promote energy/water conservation, energy efficiency and “green” building design.
7. Avoid impacts to natural and cultural resources and open space.
8. Promote mixed-use development and compatible land uses (pedestrian-friendly with access to multiple destinations within close proximity of each other).

Regional Plans of Conservation and Development

Connecticut General Statutes Section 35(a) requires that each regional planning agency must make a plan of development for its area at least once every ten years. Among other things, regional plans must address issues of land use, housing, transportation, and recreation. These plans are based on studies of physical, social, economic and governmental conditions and trends, and they should promote the coordinated development of an area.

Section 35(a) was amended in 2005 to address TOD. This amendment required that regional plan identify potential TOD locations based on their ability to have “compact, transit accessible, pedestrian-oriented mixed use development patterns and land reuse.” Such development should be consistent with the following growth management principles:

- Redevelopment and revitalization of regional centers and areas of mixed land uses with existing or planned physical infrastructure;
- Expansion of housing opportunities and design choices to accommodate a variety of household types and needs;

- Concentration of development around transportation nodes and along major transportation corridors to support the viability of transportation options and land reuse;
- Conservation and restoration of the natural environment, cultural and historical resources and traditional rural lands;
- Protection of environmental assets critical to public health and safety; and
- Integration of planning across all levels of government to address issues on a local, regional, and state-wide basis.

Southwest Regional Planning Agency (SWRPA)

Norwalk and Wilton are member communities of the Southwest Regional Planning Agency (SWRPA). The SWRPA Regional Plan of Conservation and Development 2006–2015 was prepared prior to the 2005 statute and the plan does not address TOD.

Housatonic Valley Council of Elected Officials (HVCEO)

Danbury, Bethel, Brookfield, New Milford, Redding, and Ridgefield are member communities of the Housatonic Valley Council of Elected Officials (HVCEO). The HVCEO 2009 Regional Plan of Conservation and Development identified areas where it was feasible and prudent to have compact, transit accessible, pedestrian-oriented mixed use development patterns.

The Regional Plan assessed the TOD potential at each of the Region’s existing, planned or potential rail passenger stations, the HART bus central transfer station, and along HART bus routes. The Plan’s assessment included the following comments:

Redding

Georgetown Railroad Station

Planned TOD Project

This development has received all required town, state and federal approvals. This TOD is a Brownfield redevelopment project that includes a new Georgetown Railroad Station on the Danbury Branch Line as authorized by CTDOT. (Since this was published, due to current economic conditions, the project has not moved forward.)

West Redding Railroad Station

TOD Potential: To be determined

Currently, the West Redding Railroad Station has the least patronage of any station on the Danbury Branch Line. This is an “out of the way” station location adjacent to a small, historic, and rural hamlet.

Redding’s 2008 draft Plan of Conservation and Development states “this edition of the Town Plan seeks to expand the discussion of higher density development to include the central part of the hamlet of West Redding due to its transportation resources and its resulting potential for transit-oriented development. It should be noted, though, that West Redding’s lack of public water and sewer and its sensitive location at the headwaters of the Saugatuck River may turn out to be limiting factors.”

Ridgefield

Branchville Railroad Station

TOD Potential: To be determined

In 2002, the Ridgefield Planning and Zoning Commission prepared the Branchville Village Plan that included a goal to “Preserve the train station as part of Branchville,” and to “support enhancement of the Branchville railroad station as a multi-modal transportation center with transit-oriented services at near the train station”, essentially TOD.

Bethel

Bethel Railroad Station

TOD Potential: Significant

This station is located on the northern fringe of the Bethel Village Center. This center is compact, pedestrian friendly, and contains a mix of commercial, office and institutional land and building uses surrounded by a variety of housing types. The 2007 Bethel Plan of Conservation and Development supports rail-oriented TOD around the Bethel Railroad Station. HVCEO will complete an economic feasibility study of this proposal in 2009.

Danbury

Downtown Danbury Railroad Station

TOD Potential: Significant

Commuter rail service on the Danbury Branch Line currently ends

in Downtown Danbury. With its central transfer station also located in Downtown Danbury, fixed route bus service is provided by the Housatonic Area Regional Transit District (HART) throughout the Danbury and to Bethel, Brookfield, New Milford, and Ridgefield.

Hosting these two transit facilities, Downtown Danbury can function as a TOD area. There is a wide variety of retail and service businesses and relatively high density residential neighborhoods, all located within walking distance of public transit services in an attractive, pedestrian friendly environment.

Danbury and Regional Hart Bus Stops

TOD Potential: Low at Present

Bus stops to access Housatonic Area Regional Transit vehicles on their many routes throughout the Housatonic Valley Region are numerous. But due to today’s relatively low service frequency, these geographically diffuse bus stops do not currently have the potential to become the transit element of a TOD.

Danbury North Railroad Station (Planned)

TOD Potential: Minimal

The HVCEO Future Growth Map offers a supportive “Primary Growth Area” designation for this location. The limitation on TOD potential at this site is due to the lack of developable land in the vicinity that could be linked with pedestrian access to the station and that could support the full range of TOD uses.

Brookfield

Brookfield Railroad Station (Planned)

TOD Potential: Significant

The design guidelines used by Brookfield for planning the future of the Village Center area call for mixed use development and state that the Town should “prepare for the possibility of rail passenger service from New Milford to Norwalk,” and “identify an appropriate location for a commuter parking lot connected to the rail line by a pedestrian bridge over the Still River.”

New Milford

Downtown New Milford Railroad Station (Planned)

TOD Potential: Significant

The Phase I findings of the Danbury Branch Rail Electrification Feasibility Study concluded that the restoration/extension of

commuter rail service to New Milford would result in over 300 new daily boardings and increase ridership on the Branch Line by 37%, a dramatic projection as rail studies go.

Municipal Plans of Conservation and Development

According to the Connecticut State Statute Sec. 8-23, local planning commissions must amend their plan of conservation and development at least once every ten years. These plans must:

- Be a statement of policies, goals, and standards for development of the municipality;
- Be designed to promote the development and the general welfare of residents;
- Recommend the most desirable use of land within the municipality;
- Recommend the most desirable population density within the municipality;
- Note inconsistencies it may have with the state plan of conservation and development;
- Make provisions for the development of housing opportunities; and
- Promote housing choice and economic diversity in housing.